



I Too Have Career Aspirations: A study on food delivery riders

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the gig economy resulted in a transformation of the understanding of contemporary work and careers. Within the gig economy, there is a rise in the number of people joining gig work. Previous research has explored various gig work in the professional domains. However, there still exists a lacuna in the understanding of the career of socially perceived low-skill gig work. To fill this research gap, this study explores the experiences of food delivery riders engaged on algorithmic-based platforms and examines how these experiences shape their career aspirations. Employing qualitative methodology, the current study uses the data through multiple sources, including 40 hours of field observations, 78 conversational interviews with various stakeholders, and 48 semi-structured interviews with delivery riders, deepened by insights from social and print media. The findings highlight three main phases: aspirational, experiential, and consequential. The first phase, aspirational, describes two cohorts- Temporary Sailors and Perennial Sailors, based on the delivery riders' reasons to join and engage in the food delivery work. The second phase explains the experiences of delivery riders while working with the platforms. The explanation of experiences includes multiple opportunities and challenges. Finally, the third phase of consequences highlights career action or career inaction toward food delivery riders' career aspirations. Drawing on findings, this study builds a theoretical process model on how food delivery riders navigate through the various challenges and opportunities of food delivery work while moving towards their career aspirations. Theoretically, the current study contributes to the career construction theory. The study also offers relevant insights for policymakers and platform organizations to develop work structures and practices that positively impact the careers of gig workers.

Keywords: Career, career aspirations, food delivery, gig economy, gig work, qualitative, career construction theory, subjective career.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCMA:	Career Construction Model of Adaptation
CCT:	Career Construction Theory
KCM:	Kaleidoscope Career Model
FDP:	Food Delivery Platform

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